

Lynchburg Police Department's Neighborhood Watch Program

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Help the Police

Crime and the fear of crime threaten a community's well being. People can become afraid to use the streets, parks, or even sit on their own front porches. As the law-abiding citizens stay inside out of fear, the criminals are given more opportunity to commit crimes without fear of being reported to the police. You and your neighbors can help your neighborhood become a safer and friendlier place by getting evolved in a Neighborhood Watch. A Neighborhood Watch is one of the most effective and least costly ways to prevent crime! Neighborhood Watch groups are the foundation of crime prevention efforts and can be a stepping stone to community revitalization.

A Neighborhood Watch is a group of neighbors who look out for each other's families and property, alert the police to a suspicious person or activity, and report any crime in progress. They work together with the police to make their community a better place to live.

Neighborhood Watch Basics:

Watch groups are not vigilantes. They are extra eyes and ears for reporting crime to the police.

Any community resident can join – young and old, single and married, renter and homeowner.

A few concerned residents or a community organization can spearhead the effort to organize a Watch.

Members learn how to make their homes more secure, watch out for each other and the neighborhood, and report suspicious activities to the police. They will also receive training on personal safety, Operation Identification, and other areas of concern. The Police Department will share information on local crime statistics at the watch meetings.

You can form a Watch Group around any geographical unit: a block, apartment complex, business area, or public housing complex.

Neighborhood Watch helps build pride and a sense of camaraderie among members.

For more information call: Steven Wood, Community Services Coordinator, at **455-6158**.

Starting a New Neighborhood Watch Group

1. A coordinator is the person who initiates contact with the Crime Prevention Unit and is willing to do the work to get a Neighborhood Watch Group started.
2. The coordinator's responsibility is to determine the area of boundaries for the group and distribute meeting announcements to the residents. The coordinator also is responsible for finding an appropriate place to meet and scheduling the date and time with the Community Services Coordinator at the Lynchburg Police Department.
3. There must be initial meeting(s) for the residents to receive the training on what a Neighborhood Watch is, how it functions, how to report suspicious activity, Operation Identification, establishing a phone tree, selecting block captains, etc. These meetings will each take about 1 ½ hours to complete.
4. Once the initial meetings have been held, the phone tree completed, block captains are named, and Operation ID is complete, the group is ready to be considered an official Neighborhood Watch. The members also agree to keep good and frequent communication with members of the Lynchburg Police Department.
5. Meeting frequency is up to the group coordinator and members. LPD will guarantee a representative at least once per quarter at your meeting. Most groups meet at least twice per calendar year.
6. When the above requirements have been met, the group will be able to purchase the official Neighborhood Watch signs. The residents must pay for these, but the City will put them up on the side of the street at no additional cost. The signs currently cost about \$30.00 each. They are available from the National Sheriff's Association.
7. Lynchburg's Night Out is the first Tuesday evening of August each year, in coordination with the National Night Out program. Participation can be as simple as reminding everyone to turn on their porch lights all night, or can be as elaborate as a neighborhood cookout. The way in which a group celebrates Lynchburg's Night Out Against Crime is up to the membership. The Lynchburg Police Department may also hold a city-wide event, at which Watch Groups are welcome to attend.
8. Around the middle of each month, the Community Services Coordinator will contact the Neighborhood Watch coordinator's by email to ask about any problems the groups are experiencing and to get the next month's meeting schedule. Police Officers try to attend the meetings and occasionally a City Council member or other city official will attend as well.
9. The Coordinators are encouraged to contact the Community Services Coordinator in the Crime Prevention Unit at 455-6158 any time there is a concern or crime-related problem in their neighborhood.
10. A Neighborhood Watch Quarterly Newsletter is published by the Community Services Coordinator and sent to the coordinators. The coordinators will need to distribute these to their members.